



# “Our Father’s Care.”

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A BALLAD.  
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BY MRS. SEWELL,

AUTHOR OF “MOTHER’S LAST WORDS,” “HOMELY BALLADS,”  
“THE CHILDREN OF SUMMERBROOK,” &c.

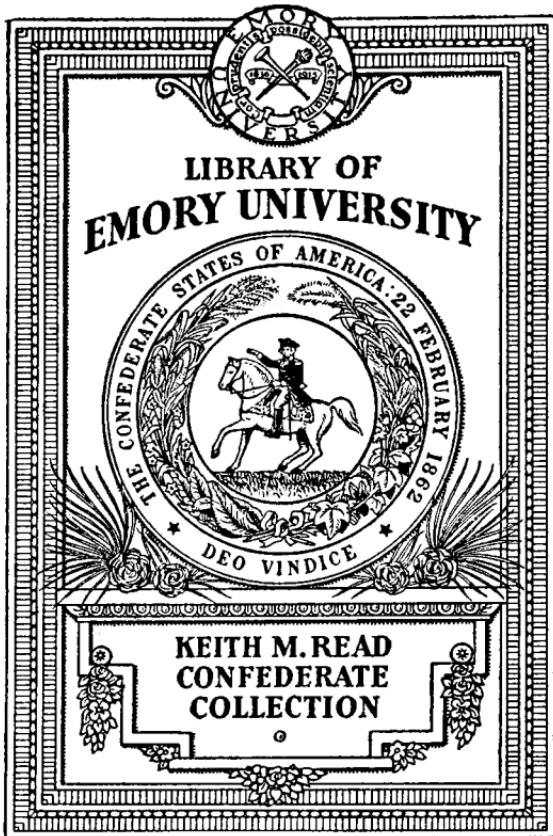
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From the Twenty-seventh London Edition.

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RICHMOND, VA:  
PRESBYTERIAN COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION.

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## OUR FATHER'S CARE.

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**T**IS five by the clock on a wintry morn,  
And dark in the east lies the lingering dawn ;  
The populous city is slumbering still,—  
And the silent whirl and the tramp of the mill ;  
The shuddering, wrestling, struggle of life,  
The pitiless crush, and the perilous strife,  
Have paused for a moment—with daylight, the strain  
Of London's great city, will go on again.

The old parish clock had just finished its stroke,  
When suddenly starting, poor Nelly\* awoke :  
So young and so little, so slender and spare,  
What work can she do in this city of care !  
She wakes up to poverty, hardship, and pain,—  
Poor child ! nestle down there, and slumber again.  
But no—she is rising—there wants nothing more,  
To rouse her from that humble bed on the floor :  
She catches tight hold of a rickety chair,  
And stands for a moment unconsciously there ;  
And then, as her little limbs shiver and shake,  
The light of her spirit begins to awake.

The gas lamp that burns in the alley below,  
Just gives light enough in the chamber to show  
Her poor mother quietly laid on her bed,—  
So quiet, that Nelly thinks—Is mother dead ?  
And creeps near to listen—“ Oh ! no, she's at rest,  
And there's pretty baby, asleep on her breast ;  
And I will not awake her—poor mother ! Oh ! no—

\* The age, occupation, and early maturity of Little Nelly, are sketched from life.

She says, I am now all her comfort below ;  
 And we should soon perish of hunger, she said,  
 If I was not able to work for the bread.

The Hospital Doctor was sure yesterday,  
 That father would still have a long while to stay,  
 And then, must not take to his work as before ;  
 And poor father said, he should do it no more,  
 And then he cried sadly, and ' Nelly,' said he,  
 ' You'll all be starved, darling, as sure as can be.'  
 Says I, ' Father, cheer up, and don't be afraid,  
 For you may depend on your own little maid ;'  
 So now, I'll be going to Farringdon Street,  
 That we may have fire, and something to eat.'

She takes up her clothes, that had lain on the bed,  
 No blanket had Nelly, they served her instead ;  
 She puts them as decently on as she may,  
 But many a fastening had broken away ;  
 And many a rent, often mended with pain,  
 Through age and long service, had worn out again ;  
 ' Twere doubtful if one scanty garment could claim,  
 In form or in fashion, the right to a name.  
 To fasten them close, they were folded and pinned,  
 To keep them from blowing about in the wind ;  
 And over the whole was a red woollen shawl,  
 And mother's black bonnet surmounted it all.

The poor little figure looked elfish and wild,  
 With nought but the size, that bespoke it a child ;  
 And quaint were her speeches, and womanly wise,  
 While courage and cheerfulness lit up her eyes.

" Ah ! Nelly, my blessing,"—the sick woman said,  
 " And are you now ready, my good little maid ?  
 The ha'pence lie there, at the end of the shelf,  
 And mind, love, don't over-weary yourself ;  
 But get to the market before it is late,  
 And don't let the loiterers tempt you to wait.  
 Use plenty of water to wash the cress sweet,  
 And tie all the bunches up, pretty and neat ;

And speak the truth, Nelly, whatever you do,  
 And don't touch a thing, not belonging to you ;  
 Remember that God keeps you always in sight,  
 And sees through the dark, just as well as the light.  
 And come back as soon as you can in the day,  
 'Tis lonely up here, child, when you are away ;  
 And I shall be glad of a hot cup of tea,  
 And nice little fire, for baby and me—  
 So run off my blessing, and don't be afraid,  
 For God will take care of my good little maid."

"Good-bye," said the child, "I shall run all the way,  
 And buy the first cress in the market to-day."

She takes the cress-basket up under her arm,  
 No lodger awakens, or feels an alarm ;  
 Or if they should notice a step on the stair,  
 Or cold creeping in from the chill morning air,  
 'Tis but the poor water-cress girl, they will say,  
 Who goes to the market before break of day ;  
 And turn round to sleep with a sigh of regret,  
 Not selfish or careless, but glad to forget.

And so she goes forth in the dark and the cold,  
 A brave little girl of but eight years old.  
 Through street and through alley, both narrow and wide,  
 Without a companion, a light, or a guide,  
 With shivering limbs, and her pattering feet,  
 She's running along in the desolate street.

Oh ! bitterly cold did the piercing wind blow,  
 And bore on its wild wing the sleet and the snow,  
 Round eddying corners and shadowy ways,  
 Dim lit by the distant lamp's flickering blaze.  
 No smiling face looked from those windows so high,  
 To cheer the brave child—who was hurrying by ;  
 The windows were curtained—the shadows were deep,  
 For still the great city was buried in sleep.  
 But rapidly onward, her little feet go,  
 Through street and through alley, by market and row ;  
 She knows all the turns, and the readiest beat,

That brings her the soonest to Farringdon Street.  
 She's past the Exchange, and the Bank, and Cheapside,  
 To where St. Paul's rises in towering pride ;  
 Nor heeds she the deep frowning shadow that falls,  
 Nor whispering echoes that talk by St. Paul's ;  
 She's used to the echo, she's used to the shade,  
 There's nothing in them to make Nelly afraid,—  
 But at the great prison, she quickens her pace,  
 She once saw a gibbet set up in that place ;  
 She knows a bad boy in confinement there now,  
 Who once lived beside them in Whitechapel Row.  
 She saw him herself on the very same day,  
 When two strong policemen had dragged him away ;  
 She saw how he struggled, how white his face grew,  
 When told of the place they were taking him to ;  
 She wonders whenever he'll get out again,  
 And if he is fettered, and cries with the pain ;  
 She listens a moment—there is not a sound,  
 Except the wild wind, that whistling round,—  
 Is that Billy screaming ? What sounded so shrill ?—  
 She's off like a dart to the foot of the Hill.

None to speak to poor Nelly, and she speaks to none,  
 Through all the great City, she's passing alone.  
 The morning patrol, on his earliest beat,  
 Sees fluttering garments and hurrying feet ;  
 And lets her pass by, with a half-dreamy eye,  
 Nor asks her a question, nor seeks a reply.

And what are the thoughts that are filling her mind,  
 As street after street she is leaving behind ?  
 Thinks she of a dolly, a book, or a ball ?—  
 She never had played with a dolly at all :  
 Thinks she of a game, when the school hours are done—  
 Of school-fellows romping, and laughing, and fun ?  
 She never had been in a school-room to learn :  
 Poor Nelly has long had a living to earn—  
 She's thinking perhaps 'tis a hardship for her  
 To get up so early, and travel so far ;  
 Whilst other girls always have plenty of food,

And she has not anything, pretty or good?—  
 No—trifles like these are not filling her mind,  
 As street after street she is leaving behind—  
 She's thinking about the poor baby that's come,  
 And mother so weak, and so helpless at home;  
 And says with a shake of her rough little head,—  
 “But I am the woman that works for their bread.”

Good, brave little girl, with your old tattered shoe,  
 And toes on the cold pavement, frozen and blue;  
 Despite your poor dress, and that careful young face,  
 You're worthy to rank with the noblest race!

The Farringdon market is open at five,  
 To sell to a hovering, shivering hive  
 Of destitute children and indigent poor,  
 The fresh water-cresses, they cry at the door.  
 The bright flaring lamp in the cress market shows,  
 Their thin eager faces, and old tattered clothes.  
 Ah! look at them now, as they handle the green,  
 Was 'ere such a pitiful company seen?  
 With only one thought,—how to earn for the day,  
 Enough to keep cold and starvation away.  
 But see—pushing through the confusion and din,  
 That mite of a child is now hurrying in:  
 She elbows her way on to look at the cress,  
 And chooses her lot, be it many or less.  
 She stops not to question what others may do,  
 If they purchase many, or only a few.  
 She carefully reckons her number of pence,  
 And that is the measure for Nelly's expence.  
 There's none to advise her, there's no one to feel,  
 'Tis each for himself, and 'tis all for a meal.  
 She pays for her bandle, and hurries along,  
 And pushes her way through the jostling throng;  
 Then squats on her heels in the slippery street,  
 To pick the cress over, and tie it up neat.  
 Then off to the pump she courageously goes,  
 Ah, me! for those poor little half-frozen toes;  
 The cold water streams on her fingers and feet,

And splashes below, on the stones of the street—  
 A sob and a shudder, that nobody heard,  
 A quiver of anguish, but never a word.  
 She dashes away a poor trickling tear,  
 “ ‘Tis childish to cry, although nobody’s near;  
 And now they are pretty, and all of them look  
 As if but this moment they came from the brook.”

She slings on the basket, the washing is done,  
 She stamps on the pavement, to make the blood run,  
 Then raises her voice in the dim London street,  
 So plaintively trilling, so simple and sweet,  
 That angels might listen, and cherubim weep,  
 Whilst half the great city lies buried in sleep.  
 Repeating,—repeating the very same song,  
 “ Fresh water-cres-e-s! sweet water-cress-e-s!  
 Oh! pray come and buy my sweet water-cress-e-s!”  
 Oh! ye, who have plenty, look out and behold,  
 This brave little girl of but eight years old!

And Nelly’s poor mother is sick and alone,  
 No neighbor to visit her; no, she had none.  
 She could not rise up from her comfortless bed,  
 But this was the prayer she constantly said,  
 “ Lord, give us this day our daily bread!

“ We have not a friend in the world but Thee,  
 And we are as poor, as the poor can be,  
 Oh! Father in heaven, take pity on me!

“ I have not a warrant, or merit, or claim,  
 Except that I come in my Saviour’s name,  
 And I have Thy promise to hear the same.

“ I bring unto Thee my trouble and care,  
 A burden too heavy for me to bear;  
 I bring it to Thee, and do not despair.

“ Look down in Thy mercy, and feed us to-day,  
 Thou knowest our need, and Thou knowest the way;  
 Thou knowest that I can do nothing but pray.

“ Oh ! give to my poor little Nelly success,  
That she may find custom to-day for her cress ;  
I do not ask more, and I cannot ask less.

“ And guard my poor lamb in these wilderness ways,  
And bring her to Christ in her earliest days ;  
For ever, my Father, to live to Thy praise.

“ Thy hand has supported me many a year ;  
Through sorrow and trouble, through danger and fear,  
I've known that my Heavenly Father was near.

“ I've known my dear Saviour was pleading for me,  
A poor worthless sinner accepted by Thee ;  
Accepted in Him who was nailed to the tree.

“ Now Father, I wait for Thy mercy to move ;  
I watch for the sign of Thy pitying love,  
And all my dependance is settled above.”

And thus she prayed on in her desolate home,  
And counted the hours till Nelly should come.

A gentleman sat in his low window seat,  
And often looked out in the dim, foggy street,  
And then looked within at his bright blazing fire,  
And round on his room, and its costly attire ;  
At well-cushioned sofa, and soft easy chair,  
At beautiful pictures, and ornaments fair ;  
And then his eye fell on his plentiful board,  
With many a luxury carefully stored ;  
Then turned to the Bible that lay on his knee—  
“ And these precious promises too are for me ;  
I rest in the love of my Saviour and Friend,  
Which time will not alter, and death cannot end.  
Oh ! what can I reader, my Father, to Thee,  
For all Thy unmerited mercies to me ?”

The gentleman thought of his silver and gold,  
And then of the destitute, hungry and cold ;  
He thought of the friendless surrounded by sin,

Temptation without, and temptation within ;  
 And then of the aged, deprived of their stay,  
 Alone and neglected, to wear life away ;  
 Of widows and orphans, unpitied, unfed,  
 In sin, or in suffering earning their bread.

He thought of the thousands whom poverty's frown,  
 With heart-aching sorrow was lowering down.

He thought, till the color rushed into his face,  
 And he walked to and fro with a resolute pace.

“ Poor creatures ! ” he murmured, “ and shall I sit here,  
 And waste on myself all this bountiful cheer ?

Was this, my dear Saviour, Thy love unto me ?  
 And this the return that I make unto Thee ?

Shall Thy needy children, in sorrow and pain,  
 Be looking for succor, and looking in vain ? ”

He walked once again to the low window seat,  
 And earnestly gazed in the dull, foggy street ;  
 When sweetly and clearly there fell on his ear,  
 The cry of a water-cress girl, drawing near.

“ Fresh water-cress-e-s ! sweet water-cress-e-s ! ”  
 Four bunches a penny, sweet water-cress-e-s ! ”

How often he'd carelessly noticed that cry  
 Draw near to his dwelling, and then pass it by !  
 But now, as he listened, the words seemed to bear  
 A message for him as they rose on the air.

And still little Nelly kept singing her song,  
 And thought to herself, as she trotted along—  
 “ They're nearly all sold, I have only a few,  
 And I shall sell them in a minute or two.”

Then smiling, she nodded her little rough head—  
 “ If folks only work, they'll be sure to have bread,  
 Because the kind Father who lives in the skies,  
 Can see us down here, with His wonderful eyes ;  
 And He can see father, and mother, and me,  
 And knows all our troubles as sure as can be ;  
 And He has made victuals for every one,  
 And we must go tell Him if we have got none.  
 I told Him that mother was hungry and sick,  
 And begged He would send me some customers quick,

And then in a minute they came for my cress,  
 All wanted a pen'orth, and none wanted less;  
 And soon I'll be having some buyers for these—  
 Four bunches a penny, sweet water-cress-e-s ! ”  
 Again up on high she caroled her cry,  
 “ Come, buy my sweet cresses, my sweet cresses buy ! ”

The gentleman stood by the low window seat,  
 And saw the poor child in the dull, foggy, street :  
 “ Oh ! Saviour,” he said, “ and this infant may be  
 A lamb of the fold, who is looking to Thee ; ”  
 And hastily tapped with his hand on the pane,  
 “ All right,” thought the child, as she nodded her head,  
 “ Sure I am the woman that earns mother's bread.”

The gentleman came down himself to the door.  
 A handful of bread from his table he bore.  
 He looked at the poor little shivering thing,  
 And marvelled that she had the courage to sing.  
 “ Here's bread, my poor child, for your breakfast,” he said ;  
 “ And will you, kind Sir, take some cresses instead ? ”  
 “ I'll buy your nice cress for my breakfast,” said he,  
 “ But perished with cold I am sure you must be.”  
 “ Yes, Sir,” replied Nelly, “ I'm cold, it is true,  
 But then I have plenty of work to do,  
 So I never trouble to think of the cold,  
 For I am just turned of my eight years old ;  
 My father is ill in the hospital, Sir,  
 My mother's in bed, and too weakly to stir.”  
 Then lifting her basket she cheerily said—  
 “ So I am the woman that works for the bread.”  
 The gentleman told her to call the next day.  
 And gave her a sixpence on going away.

Then did little Nelly's heart sing with delight,  
 And all things about her seemed dancing in light ;  
 The discords of London were turned into song,  
 All friendly to her as she trotted along ;  
 And tuneful the clamor that rose in Cheapside,  
 As nightingale's song in the sweet eventide.

The scents were as pleasant, for aught Nelly knew,  
 As banks of blue violets sprinkled with dew;  
 Her blithe little heart had the secret within,  
 That perfumed the odours, and softened the din.  
 With that silver sixpence tight grasped in her hand,  
 What luxury was it she could not command!  
 She looked in the shops with an undaunted eye,  
 Considering, thoughtfully what she could buy.  
 "What would mother like?" she kept saying aloud,  
 Unnoticed, unheard, by the hurrying crowd.  
 She saw in the windows fine joints of cooked meat,  
 But thought, perhaps, that was too much of a treat;  
 The coffee smelt pleasant, and eggs white as snow,  
 With rolls and fresh butter were placed in a row;  
 But Nelly turned from them, and went on her way.  
 "I think mother wouldn't buy these things to-day,  
 I know she likes best a good cup of strong tea,  
 She'll have it this morning, as sure as can be;  
 I'll buy her some tea, some butter and coals,  
 Here's plenty of bread, and two beautiful rolls.  
 I'm sure she was right not to murmur and grieve;  
 She said, 'Do your best, and we'll pray and believe.'  
 I will always pray, and believe for the rest,  
 And God knows I'm trying to do for the best."

And now let us look in that poor upper room,  
 And say, shall we find only sickness and gloom?  
 A small fire is burning, the water is hot,  
 The tea is put into the little teapot,  
 And all things are carefully set in their place,  
 While tears trickle down on the poor mother's face,  
 As Nelly tells over, again and again,  
 How loud the kind gentleman tapped on the pane.

"Ah! Nelly, my blessing—the lions may roar,  
 And suffer from hunger; but still evermore  
 That word shall stand firm of our Saviour who said,  
 Who trust in His promise shall surely be fed;  
 We're like the poor sparrows that chirp in the eaves,  
 Not one is forgotten, but some way receives  
 A crumb, or a grain, that was scattered or sown

For those who have no storehouse, or barn of their own.  
 I hear them a-chirping before it is day,  
 And think to myself, you shall teach me to pray,  
 My cupboard is empty, and starved must I be,  
 Unless God should scatter some crumbs down for me.”  
 “ Well, mother, the sparrows did teach you to pray,  
 For we have a beautiful breakfast to-day,  
 So we won’t be sorry and fret for the rest,  
 You’ll ask God to help us, and I’ll do my best.”

And so the days passed without fear or despair,  
 But hard days of labor and patience they were;  
 The rain beat on Nelly, she rose ere the light,  
 Her limbs were oft weary, her small face was white;  
 But like a brave woman, she kept to her post,  
 And when it blew hardest she struggled the most.  
 Ah ! yes, they had troubles and puzzles enow,  
 The candle burnt out, and the fire burnt low;  
 And things would get dirty, as every one knows,  
 And Nelly was little to wash out the clothes;  
 And rent-day would come, and the rent must be paid,  
 And they had no help but the water-cress trade.  
 And people would sometimes get into debt,  
 They d pay on the morrow, and then they’d forget.  
 And so they had poverty, hardship, and pain,  
 Not two or three times, but again and again:  
 Yet Nelly’s good mother still held up her head,  
 ’Twas the will of her Heavenly Father, she said;  
 And things would grow better, safe under His care,  
 If not—He would give her the patience to bear.  
 She’d never mistrust that His promise stood fast,  
 Thro’ rough or thro’ smooth, it would come right at last.

But tidings now reached her of sorrow and fear,  
 Sad news for the poor lonely mother to hear :  
 Her husband was rapidly wasting away,  
 The doctor had said he might die any day,  
 And Nelly was sent, as the day’s work could spare,  
 To see how he was, and to comfort him there—  
 To carry him words of the tenderest love,

And beg him to fix his dependence above.  
 One morning her mother said, "Go, Nelly, dear,  
 I think by my feelings, the end must be near,  
 And try and remember the words we have read—  
 The beautiful things that our Saviour has said ;  
 And don't let him fret for our troubles, dear man !  
 But cheer him, my blessing—as well as you can."

## SECOND PART.

Then Nelly set off to the great house alone,  
 'Mongst the dying and sick, as she often had done ;  
 And through the long ward, as the little girl passed,  
 Kind looks of compassion upon her were cast.  
 She stood by the bed—was her father asleep ?  
 His face was so white, and his eyes were so deep :  
 She touched his thin hand as it lay on the sheet,  
 And then with her little voice steady and sweet,  
 Said, "Father ! dear father !" and then kissed his brow,  
 "Mother wants very bad to know how you are now."  
 He opened his eyes with a heavy-drawn sigh ;  
 "Ah ! Nelly, you've come to see poor father die—  
 Sit down on the bed, child—sit down by me here,  
 'Tis hard work to leave you without any fear ;  
 You must be starved, darling—for what can you do ?  
 Ahe family can't be supported by you.  
 And how did you fare yesterday in the storm,  
 With nothing to eat, and no fire to warm ?  
 I thought of you starving there, all the day long,  
 And knew your poor mother would never get strong."

"I'll tell you," said Nelly, and sat on the bed ;  
 "At present I've always earned plenty of bread.  
 Well—yesterday morning, the time that I wake,  
 Our window was rattling, ready to break,  
 And rain battered on it, till mother did say,  
 'You'd better not go to the market to-day.'  
 You don't suppose, father, I listened to that,  
 But tied my old handkerchief over my hat,  
 And with mother's blessing, I got in the street ;  
 But hard work it was then to keep my feet.

Sometimes the wind drove me, I could not stand still,  
 Sometimes at a corner I turned like a mill.  
 My clothes clung about me, soaked through with the rain,  
 Says I, 'Nelly Hardy, you must try again.'  
 I often fell down, and I could not go fast,  
 But somehow I got to the market at last:  
 And there the sales-women fell pitying me,  
 And said, 'Nelly, child, what an object you be!'  
 And one said my mother was 'hard and unkind.'  
 'I come,' says I, 'Missis, to ease my own mind;  
 My mother is ill, and can't rise from her bed,  
 So I am the woman that works for the bread.'  
 Well, then she gave me a great armful of cress,  
 She said in her conscience, she could not do less.  
 'Twas twice as much father, as ever I get,  
 And *that* came, you see, of the wind and the wet.  
 The storm kept on blowing, the rain pelted down,  
 But people all seemed to want cress in the town;  
 They looked from the windows, and came to the door,  
 I'd never such luck with my cresses before.  
 And then the good gentleman tapped on the pane.  
 And that very day gave me sixpence again.  
 I know 'twas our Father, who lives in the sky,  
 That made all the people so anxious to buy.  
 Then just as I came to the end of Milk Street,  
 And thinking I'd carry dear mother a treat,  
 A man pushed against me, and then he turned round,  
 And said, 'My poor lassie, you look almost drowned;  
 I'm off to eat breakfast, if you come with me  
 My missis will give you a cup of good tea,  
 And may-be, she'll find you a bit of dry clothes,  
 Or old pair of shoes just to cover your toes;  
 I've three little girls not much bigger than you,  
 Amongst them they'll find up a trifle or two.'  
 And then he talked kindly as we walked along,  
 And asked to what sort of folks I could belong.  
 'My good little lass,' he said, 'can that be true?'  
 For I had told him about mother and you,  
 And how mother prayed on her bed as she lay,  
 And so we were sure of some food every day.  
 He said she was right, he had tried that himself.

He knew 'twas the way to keep bread on the shelf.  
 And then his wife dried me, and gave me some tea,  
 And this pretty frock and these shoes, father—see !  
 And put in my basket some pieces of bread,  
 And slices of meat for my mother, she said ;  
 And mother did like it, and thought 'twas so good,  
 And she said ' Our Father had sent us the food ; '  
 And I thought, and mother thought, 'twas very plain  
 They would not have pitied me but for the rain ;  
 And she said, that all things were safe in God's hand,  
 Because when He promised, He gave a command ;  
 And those who believe Him, and trust in the Lord,  
 Find even the tempest fulfilling His word.  
 She said the old lions might roar for their prey,  
 Or young lions hunt through the forest all day,  
 And still might be hungry for want of their food,  
 But God's people never lacked any thing good."

Then Nelly ceased talking, and stood on the floor,  
 Her father said,—“ Nelly, dear, tell me some more,  
 The things that you talk about comfort my mind,  
 And make me more willing to leave you behind.”

Then Nelly was pleased, she had come there for that,  
 So down by her father she willingly sat,  
 And thus she began without any ado—  
 “ Yes, father, I'll tell a nice story to you.

There was a good prophet, a long time ago,  
 (The story is all in the Bible, you know,  
 We often have read it since you have been here,  
 At least, mother reads, and I sit by to hear.)  
 There was a good prophet, a long time ago,  
 Who lived amongst very bad people you know,  
 Who did not love God, though He was very good,  
 But made foolish gods out of pieces of wood ;  
 And so to chastise them, and bring them to think,  
 The wells all dried up, and they had nothing to drink :  
 The rain never fell down to moisten the ground,  
 Not even a small drop of dew could be found ;  
 And so the plants withered, the corn would not grow,

And there was a terrible famine, you know.  
 The horses and cattle had nothing to eat,  
 And so they were famished, and dropt in the street,  
 And all the people were dying in crowds,  
 But still not a drop of rain came from the clouds ;  
 For they were not sorry, and did not repent,  
 Although they had this punishment sent.  
 My mother explained the story to me,  
 The whole is not written in one place you see.”

“ Well, darling, and what did the good prophet do ? ”  
 “ Ah ! that is the part I am now coming to ;  
 There was in the country a beautiful place,  
 Away from that naughty idolatrous race ;  
 And there was a spring of clear water that ran  
 In a deep little brook, for the use of the man ;  
 And God hid him up there, and told him to 'bide,  
 And drink of the water that He had supplied.”

“ But what did he eat, child ? How did that befall ? ”  
 “ Oh ! just stop a moment, and I'll tell you all,—  
 God made him a promise, that every day  
 He'd send him some food in a very strange way—  
 Mother says, 'tis not strange, for the mighty God can  
 Make use of a bird, just as well as a man ;  
 And so he commanded some ravens to bring,  
 Good food to the prophet, who lived by the spring.  
 They came in the morning, as soon as 'twas light,  
 And then came again with his supper at night ;  
 They always knew where to find nice bread and meat,  
 And so the good prophet had plenty to eat.  
 They never forgot, or came lagging behind,  
 Because it was always kept fresh in their mind ;  
 The prophet had only to wait and believe,  
 As mother says, only to ask and receive,  
 Because the Lord's promise will always endure,  
 That bread shall be given, and water be sure.”

“ Well, darling,—and did the stream always run fast,  
 Or did the good prophet's brook dry up at last ? ”  
 “ It dried up at last—but then, God spake and said,

I've commanded a widow to feed thee with bread.  
 He told him the city the widow lived at—  
 I think 'twas Sarepta, or something like that.  
 And so he set off on his journey once more,  
 He never had seen the poor widow before—  
 I don't think it says, if 'twas early or late,  
 But there she was, waiting just close by the gate.  
 He said to her,—‘Bring me some water, I pray,’—  
 (No doubt he was thirsty with walking all day ;)  
 And as she was going so ready and kind,  
 To bring him a cup of the best she could find,  
 He asked her to bring him some bread in her hand,  
 But that brought the poor widow quite to a stand.  
 She said, ‘As thy soul lives, I have not a cake’—  
 And then such a sorrowful tale she did make ;  
 She had but a handful of meal then to use,  
 And just the last drop of her oil in a cruse.  
 ‘I've come out to gather a few sticks,’ said she,  
 ‘To cook the last meal for my poor son and me’—  
 And that was the end of her little supply,  
 And she and her son both expected to die.  
 ‘Fear not,’ said the prophet, ‘but do as you said,’  
 (And that was, to make the meal up into bread.)  
 For thus saith the word of the Lord unto you,  
 (The word of the Lord, father, always is true,)  
 ‘The meal in the barrel shall never get less,  
 Till there is an end of the present distress.’”  
 “How could that be, darling” “Oh! that I don't know,  
 But the meal did not waste in the barrel, you know;  
 There still was a handful whenever they went;  
 The oil in the bottle that never was spent.  
 They eat every day for the whole of a year,  
 And whilst others starved, they had nothing to fear,  
 They never sat down to a poor empty board,  
 And that came, you see, from believing the Lord.”  
 “Ah! Nelly, but that was a long time ago,  
 We don't have such prophets in these days, you know.”

Then Nelly sat still, she had much on her mind,  
 But words to express it weren't easy to find

“If I could be sure you would have a supply,  
 'Twould not be so hard for me, darling, to die.  
 What will you do, child, when the bell has been tolled,  
 And they've put your poor father under the mould ?”  
 Then Nelly looked up,—“ We have not wanted yet,  
 And got on the best in the wind and the wet.”  
 “ Yes, yes, child—but then there's a long time to come,  
 How will your poor mother make out for a home ?”  
 “ I dare say we'll do, as we have done before,  
 Mother says there's no end of the heavenly store.  
 She bid me to tell you some words that God said,  
 I don't think I've got them exact in my head,  
 It was a sweet promise sent down from the sky,  
 On purpose to comfort you if you should die.”

“What is it, my darling? I wish I could find  
 Myself more contented to leave you behind.”

“Thy fatherless children—yes, that is the word—  
 I will certainly keep them alive, saith the Lord ;  
 And then, says the promise as plain as can be,  
 And let thy poor widow depend upon me—  
 And so you may leave us contentedly here,  
 If God will preserve us, we've nothing to fear.”

“That's beautiful, Nelly! I soon shall be gone,  
 You'll need such a Friend in this hard world alone.”

“ We'll not be *alone*, father—Jesus did say,  
 I never will leave you, I'm with you alway ;  
 And, dear mother says, though the heavens may shake,  
 He'll never forsake us, He'll never forsake.”

“That's beautiful, Nelly! 'tis balm to my mind,  
 And now I'm contented to leave you behind,  
 My last chain is broken, and taken away,  
 And I have no wish any longer to stay—  
 Tell mother, I'm willing to leave her alone,  
 But don't let her grieve, Nelly, when I am gone ;  
 'Twould kill her to go to the workhouse, I know,  
 Oh! Nelly, my darling, you'll not let her go !

But do your best for her, and work for the bread,  
And may the Lord keep every hair of your head.”

He looked at her fondly, and then closed his eyes,  
“Now tell me the poor sinner’s way to the skies;  
I’ve learned it, my darling—but still I would die  
While seeing the poor sinner’s way to the sky,  
And hearing about the white robe, and the feast,  
The city of gold, and the mansions of rest;  
So tell me of all the sweet words that you know,  
I’m longing to hear them, I’m listening now.”

Then Nelly sat still, and bethought her again,  
Of what her good mother had taught her so plain,  
And kissing his ashy cold cheek as he lay,  
She went on again in her own simple way;  
Nor deemed that her dear father’s laboring breath,  
Would soon have a close in the silence of death.

“Tis easy for sinners to come to the Lord,  
They’ve but to repent and believe in His word,  
And God, for the sake of His well-beloved Son,  
Will pardon them all the bad things they have done,  
And give them His Spirit, that so they may grow  
Just like Jesus Christ, when He lived here below;  
And they are so happy when they are forgiven,  
For they are the sons of our Father in heaven.”

Then Nelly tried hard to remember a text,  
And wondered what words she had better say next;  
Her father looked at her as if he would say,  
“Go on, Nelly dear, I shall leave you to-day.”  
“Yes, father, I will,” and she held his hand fast,  
Tears stood in her eyes, but her words came at last.

“I know that some beautiful clothing is wrought,  
A beautiful dress for poor sinners is bought,  
And when they have nothing at all of their own,  
They come to the Saviour, and He puts it on;  
‘Tis white as the snow, and as bright as the day,  
Not even the angels are fairer than they;

In this they may stand by the heavenly throne,  
 So welcome to God through the well-beloved Son.  
 In this they are called to a heavenly feast,  
 Prepared for all people, the greatest and least;  
 For kings that like David sit up on a throne,  
 And beggars who cry on a dunghill alone;  
 But none may come in, not the king on the throne,  
 Except that fine garment be over him thrown;  
 And poor humble people are glad of this dress,  
 I think mother called it ‘Christ’s righteousness.’”

The child paused a moment—he motioned again;  
 He spoke not a word, for he could not speak then;  
 A trembling look on her father she cast,  
 Tears stood in her eyes, but her words followed fast,  
 “I know that poor sinners are welcome to God,  
 Whose souls are made pure by the dear Saviour’s blood;  
 I know they will come to the heavenly rest,  
 And lay their tired heads on the dear Saviour’s breast.  
 I know they will never be hungry again,  
 Nor cry with their trouble, nor suffer with pain.”

His eyes looked again—“Oh! I know they will stand  
 With the sheep of the fold, on the Saviour’s right hand;  
 He’ll wipe all the tear-drops away from their eyes,  
 And poor sinners will not shed tears in the skies;  
 They’ll walk in the streets with the pavement of gold,  
 Or rest in the shade with the lambs of the fold;  
 And that not for any thing good they have done,  
 But all for the sake of the well-beloved Son.  
 No candle burns there, in that happy abode,  
 The city is bright with the glory of God;  
 And music is sounding there all the day long,  
 Our own little baby could join in the song.  
 And you will sing there with poor mother and me;  
 Oh! father, how happy and joyful we’ll be!  
 For ever and ever our songs we shall raise,  
 And never be tired of ‘glory and praise;’  
 And that not for any thing good we have done,  
 But all for the sake of the well-beloved Son.”

She ceased, and her dear father opened his eyes—  
“ Yes, that is the poor sinner’s way to the skies ;  
I’m going there, Nelly ; the sins I have done,  
Are all put away through the well-beloved Son ;  
That beautiful raiment is over me thrown,  
And I shall stand there by the heavenly throne ;  
My Saviour is coming, I’m catching the sound  
Of sweet angel music, all floating around.

I’m going there now ”

There was light on his brow,  
Then up to the skies  
He lifted his eyes,  
With a bright sweet smile  
On his face the while ;  
One struggling breath,  
And the hand of death  
Had broken the chain  
Of his grief and pain,  
And the soul had fled  
From the silent dead,  
And free as the lark,  
And above the dark,  
And above the cloud,  
And the toiling crowd,  
Had entered the rest  
Of the good and blest ;  
But the hand that was grasped,  
And so fondly clasped,  
Now lifeless and cold,  
Had relaxed its hold,  
And the orphan child  
Was left in the wild.

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‘ Oh ! there was a sound of weeping,  
In that lonely home,  
And the shade of terror creeping,  
O’er the days to come.

He was gone—no farewell taken,  
 Gone, without caress;  
 And the mother was forsaken,  
 In her sore distress.

All around looked dark and dreary,  
 Troubled, full of care,  
 And her spirit was so weary,  
 Nigh unto despair.

Weeping, weeping, sad and lonely,  
 On her bed she lay;  
 For some transient hours only,  
 Nature had its way.

“Mother must not grieve,” thought Nelly,  
 “Now we are alone;  
 I must try and be her comfort,  
 Now dear father’s gone.”

Then she went and stood beside her,  
 In her loving way;  
 And her simple heart soon found her  
 Just the words to say.

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“When father heard the promise,  
 The pretty text you sent;  
 He said it made him happy,  
 And he could die content.”

“What was the promise, Nelly?  
 I want to hear it now,—  
 But did there shine a glory,  
 Upon your father’s brow?”

“Oh! yes, dear mother, never,  
 Did I see such a sight.

His face was beaming over,  
All with a shining light.

“ And such a smile he gave me,  
As I did never see ;  
He must have seen the angels,  
As plain as he saw me.

“ He looked beyond the ceiling,  
High up, and far away ;  
He said, he saw his Saviour,  
And heard the music play.

“ If you had seen him smiling,  
I'm sure you would not cry ;  
He looked so happy, mother,  
He did not seem to die.

“ And there was such a stillness,  
So peaceful round the bed ;  
I almost thought the angels  
Were hovering round my head.

“ I laid my cheek to father's,  
His cheek was cold as clay ;  
And then, I kissed and kissed him,  
And then I came away.

“ And running home, so lonely,  
I always seemed to hear,  
The words that made him happy,  
Keep sounding in my ear.

“ For now I am an orphan,  
And you're a widow too ;  
And don't you think its certain,  
We'll find that promise true ? ”

“ Yes, Nelly—yes, my blessing,  
And we must trust it now ;  
And trust that God will help us,  
Although we see not how.

“We’ve nothing but his promise,  
 We hang upon his word ;  
 But not in vain ’tis written,  
 That faithful is the Lord.

“He will not disappoint us,  
 I feel it in my heart ;  
 Although I sorrow, Nelly,  
 My faith will not depart.

“The widow and the orphan,  
 Are God’s especial care ;  
 Now let us read His promise,  
 And then we’ll make our prayer.”

And scarcely was the promise read,  
 And scarce the prayer prayed,  
 When through the hand of Providence,  
 There came the timely aid.

The gentleman—poor Nelly’s friend,  
 So good to her before,  
 Had found the lowly lodging house,  
 And tapped upon the door.

And he became their comforter,  
 He wiped away their tears,  
 He softened all their poverty,  
 Through many coming years.

And he was blessed in what he had,  
 And what he gave away,  
 For why ? he did it unto Him,  
 Who doth so richly pay.

“It is the Lord,” the widow said,  
 His promise cannot fail ;  
 And faith that’s built upon His word,  
 Is certain to prevail.”

It will prevail for all who trust,  
 And cast on Him their care ;

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